

Nuts and Bolts: Stories from New Britain Manufacturing  
Connecticut Humanities CT at Work Project  
CCSU Student Jim Enderle  
Interview Subject: Henry Skonieczny

Silent killers, responsible for WWII's crushing firebombing of London not much longer than a year before confidently verified the grid coordinates at the heart of a sleeping giant. Latitude 41.669545. Longitude -72.782707. New Britain's Fafnir ball plant's exact location had attracted the attention of the feared Luftwaffe, soon able to be launched from Germany's new aircraft carrier of the Graf Zeppelin class. The Germans were one successful Operation Pastorius terror plot, hailed by Hitler himself as the "sabotage of America's spirit," away from flight launch.

Meanwhile workers of the Fafnir plant milled around and talked before the start of a routine work day, their thoughts traveling not much further than the smell of donuts, hot coffee, oil-soaked wooden floors, and the pulsating sounds of heavy machinery. Even after repeated Civil Air Defense air drills, few if any realized how dire the possibilities were. The Germans, world leaders in ball bearing technology, had empowered the world history's devastating army. They planned on keeping it that way, while putting a screeching halt to the American war effort.

Henry Skonieczny, a third generation Fafnir employee paused with a laugh. We'd wondered if those workers would have reported to work with full disclosure. Our entire conversation had been of the highs and lows of New Britain's proud industrial history, the advances from home appliances to lunar landings to jet engines and the essential cog that was the Fafnir plant to success, generations of pride and ingenuity. Knowing that spirit even under those circumstances, I'd bet each worker would drink that morning coffee and go to work.

